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SUBJECT: MADAGASCAR: PROGRESS TOWARD AN AGREEMENT, AS
SENEGAL ENTERS THE FRAY

Classified By: AMBASSADOR NIELS MARQUARDT FOR REASONS 1.5 D AND E.

¶1. (C) Summary: President Wade of Senegal has entered the fray in Madagascar, inviting the "four protagonists" -- TGV, Ravalomanana, Ratsikaka, and Zafy -- to Dakar this week to reach and sign a political agreement on the way forward to elections. The reaction here, among both the Malagasy themselves and international partners, is decidedly tepid, as they prefer to let the UN/AU-led local process continue with no need perceived either for Wade's direct engagement or for moving the whole show out of Madagascar. This initiative looks from here as if it will die on its own. Meanwhile, the local mediation effort continues to show promise of resulting in a signed agreement soon, which -- in its current draft form -- would exclude the four protagonists from running in the next election, and also bar any minister or higher figure in the transition from running either. That agreement would not return Madagascar immediately to "constitutional order," but it would create a consensual path forward to early elections that would do so. End summary.

¶2. (C) The UN's Tiebile Drame returned to Tana from Addis on May 2 and has worked round-the-clock since then in separate meetings with the various political "families" and actors -- TGV/HAT, R8/TIM, Ratsirake/Arema, Pierrot/Arema, Zafy/CNR, the churches, civil society, the military and the "elders" -- to keep the process moving forward. By Sunday he had refined his draft agreement to lay out seven temporary "institutions of the transition," including an executive, legislature, two "reconciliation" bodies, a new high court, and an independent electoral commission led by civil society.

It also lays out several key principles to guide the transition, notably that no one who previously served as head of state could run in the next presidential election, nor could any minister or higher figure in the transition who will organize these elections. TGV has told Drame that he will not run in any event, and his "foreign minister" said the same thing to Ambassador Marquardt over the weekend. The presidential mandate will be fixed at four years, renewable once (currently it is five years, renewable twice). There are also amnesty provisions for "political crimes," as well as a complete "annulment" of all charges and convictions against Ratsiraka.

¶3. (C) The International Contact Group for Madagascar (ICG-M) has not met locally since its initial meeting took place in Addis on April 30. The AU is supposed to be in charge of the ICG-M, but AU Envoy Ablasse Ouedraogo went directly from Addis to Ouagadougou and only returned to Tana on May 10. The UN's Drame has kept Ouedraogo informed of his activities, but did not let his absence deter him from moving ahead. Interestingly, former OAU Secretary General Amara Essy is also reportedly back in Madagascar at AU request, and Francophonie Envoy Kodjo, a former Togolese Prime Minister, is also in town. The newly-named SADC Special Envoy, former Swazi Prime Minister Absalom Thembu Dlamini, is also expected to arrive imminently. It is likely that the ICG-M will meet

once all these players are assembled. This delay, it is widely hoped, also will allow SADC to make progress toward moderating its unrealistic position demanding the return of Marc Ravalomanana as the means by which Madagascar would achieve "constitutional order." However, a formal change of the position of the SADC heads of state probably can only be taken at the Summit level, so eyes here are on the rescheduling of the Summit postponed from May 10.

¶4. (C) Meanwhile, President Wade of Senegal has entered the fray, over the weekend confidentially inviting the four protagonists to fly this week to Dakar for a "Dakar III" conference that, he says, would culminate in their signature of a political agreement ending the crisis. (Note: Wade was a major actor in the 2001-2 Malagasy crisis, convening two previous conferences -- Dakar I and Dakar II. Neither conference was truly successful and some here suspect that one motivation on his part may be to vindicate and burnish Senegal's role as trouble-shooter. End Note.) His new initiative is not publicly known (although nothing stays secret here for very long), but it is already generating considerable pushback and seems unlikely to come to fruition.

Zafy and Ratsiraka reportedly have declined to go, and Ravalomanana's position is unknown. TGV is in frequent phone touch with Wade, as is R8's "Prime Minister" Manandafy. Ambassador Marquardt and the Senegalese Ambassador visited Manandafy over the weekend at his detention site at Mantasoa. During that visit, Manadafy took a call from Wade, to whom he also expressed doubt over the wisdom of going to Dakar now. Drame of the UN sees the Dakar initiative as entirely unnecessary, as talks are going well already and the trip to Dakar might just create new problems about participation that currently are a non-issue. The EU ambassador here also sees the Senegalese initiative as unnecessary and reports that Wade is asking for logistical support from the EU and France in order to pull it off. The French reportedly are not enthusiastic either.

¶5. (C) Comment: We share the concerns outlined above. However, we are not predicting any immediate breakthrough, particularly as Ravalomanana's intransigent, maximalist stance, fueled unhelpfully by SADC's position (and his own imagination and arrogance), may not yet have shifted. Indeed, he issued an outrageous press release on Friday calling on the rest of the world to follow SADC's lead. Others' positions may also shift as a difficult consensus is sought. All that said, we believe there is more promise and less risk in continuing on the local track, and in leaving the Dakar option in reserve, if indeed it is needed at all.

MARQUARDT